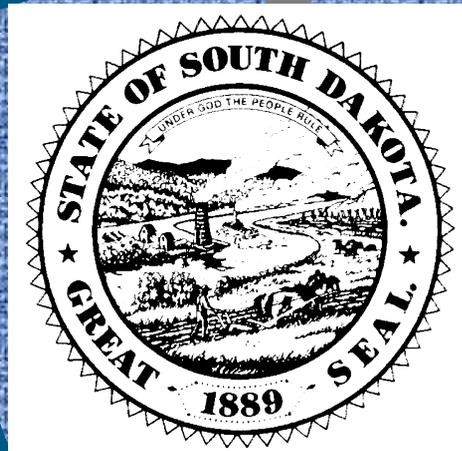


1999 Consumer Affairs Report



Leni Healy, Director

*South Dakota
Public Utilities
Commission*

01/20/2000

Responsibilities of the Division

- **Investigate consumer complaints**
- **Negotiate settlements between consumers and utility companies**
- **Consumer Outreach and Education**
- **Monitor trends in consumer activity**
- **Advise Commission on consumer issues**
- **Assist consumers when addressing the Commission**
- **Develop recommendations for change in rules**

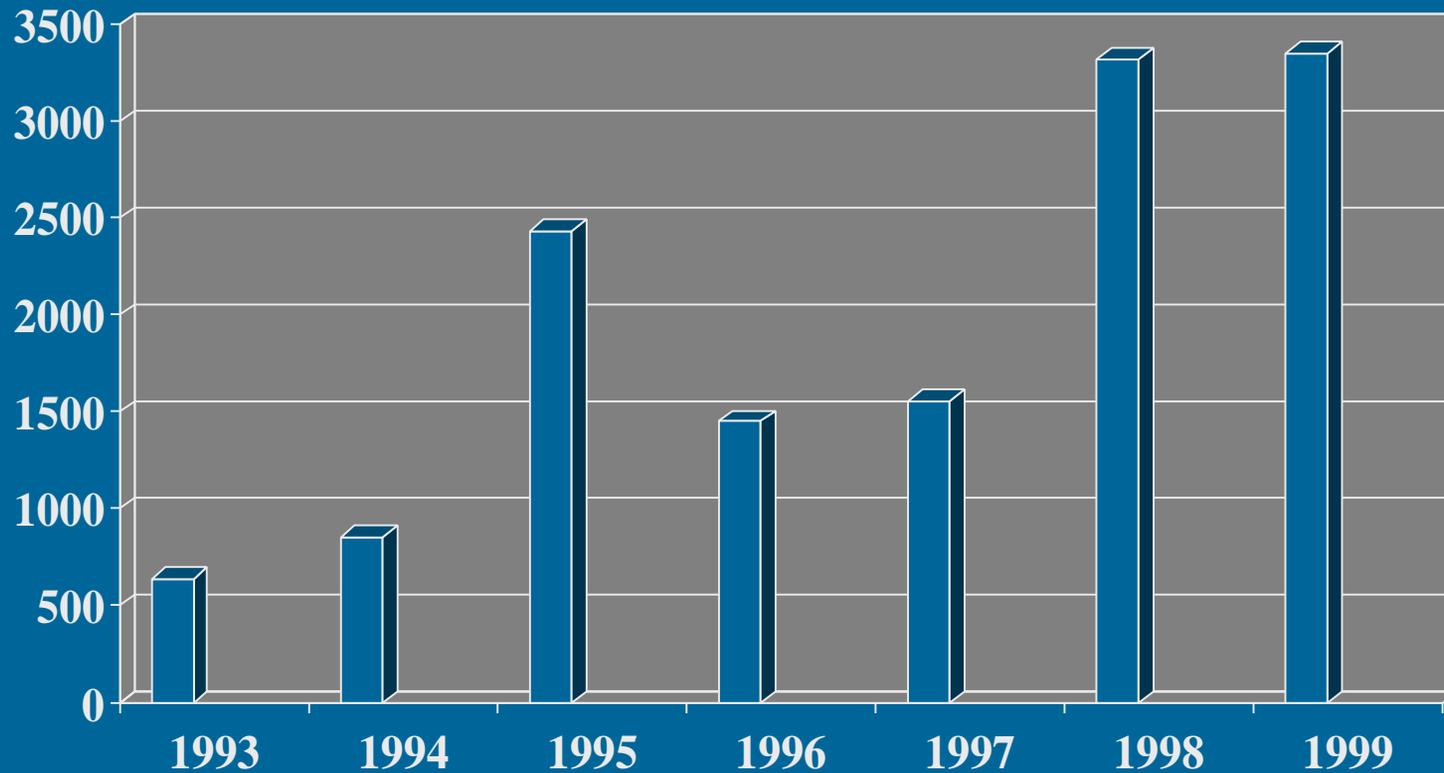
Organization of the Division

- The Consumer Affairs Division is composed of one consumer representative and the director of consumer affairs.

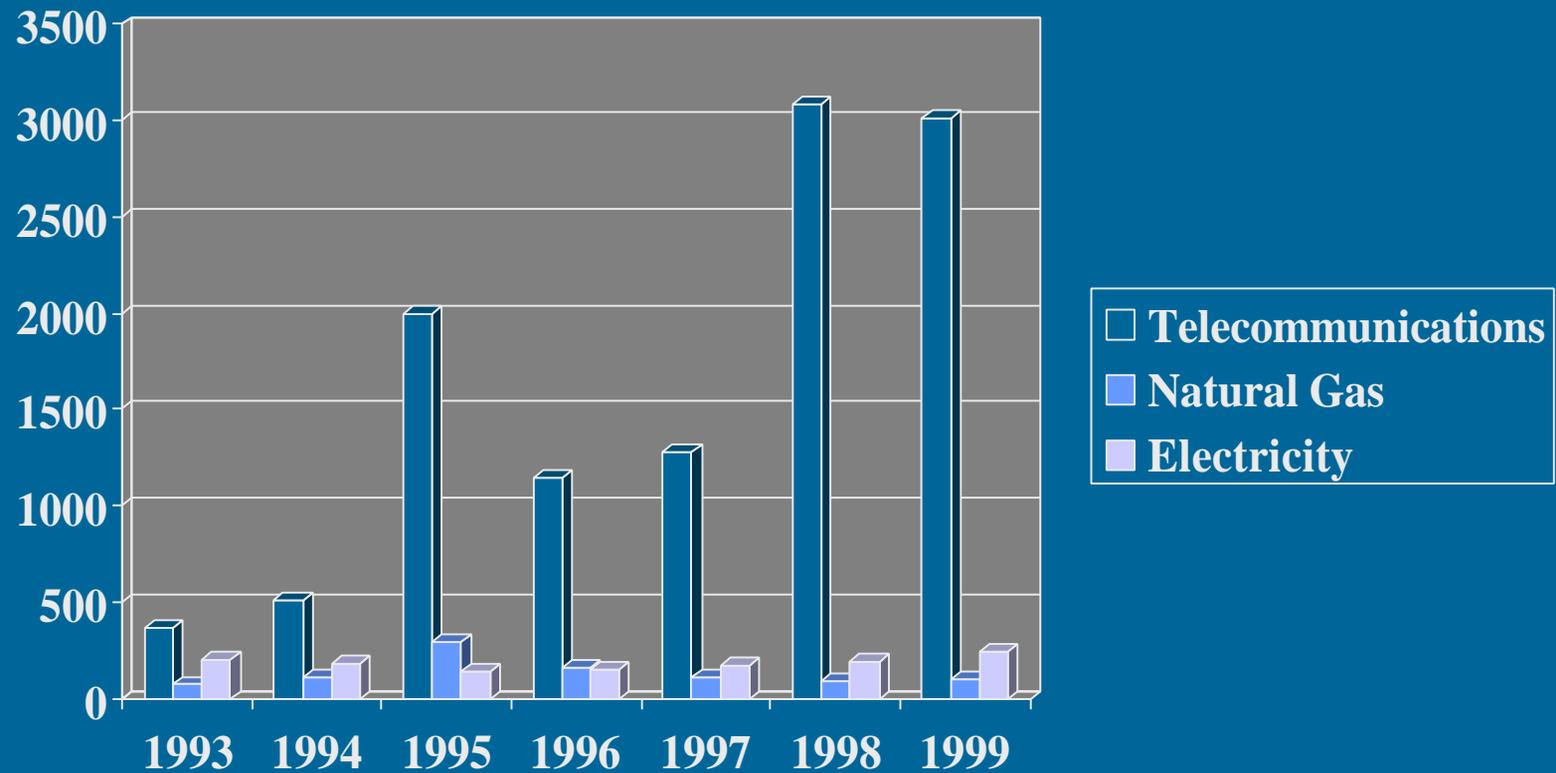
Consumer Contacts/Complaints

- The public may contact the PUC by phone, electronically, in person, by fax, through internet and by mail.
- Complaints may be handled informally through negotiation with all parties or through a formal hearing process.
 - 98% of consumer issues are handled informally.
 - For the 2% of consumer issues elevated to the formal level, this division assists the consumer in preparation for the formal process.

of Consumer Contacts/Complaints: 1993-1999

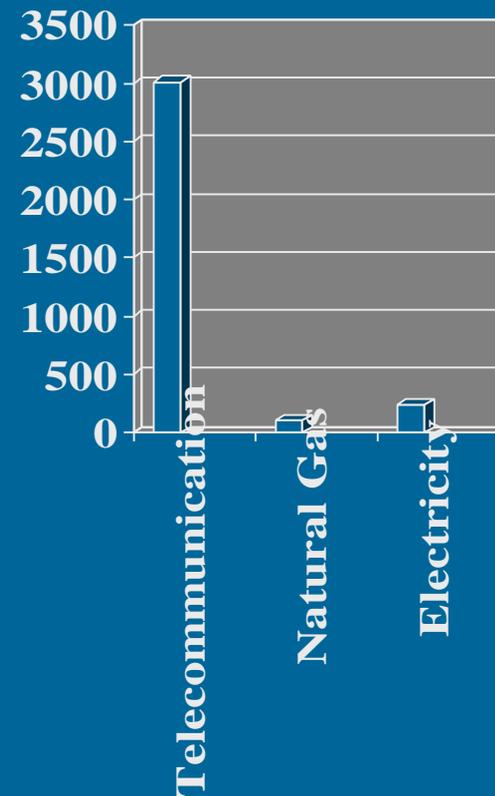


Consumer Contacts/Contacts *by industry*: 1993-1999



1999 Consumer Contacts/Complaints: *by utility type*

- **Total number of contacts received in 1999: 3354**
- Number of contacts by utility type
 - telecommunications: 3014
 - natural gas: 99
 - electricity: 241



Companies Which Slammed or Crammed

Slamming (unauthorized switching of telecommunication services) and *cramming* (billing for unauthorized services) are two of the most frequent complaints reported by South Dakotans.

- OLS (On Line Services) - 518
- MCI - 116
- AT&T - 39
- Touchtone/Western Telcom - 38
- USBI - 31
- Qwest - 30
- Sprint - 24
- FirsTel - 22
- U S Republic - 21
- Excel - 20
- Basic Long Distance - 19
- Service One - 13
- ITI - 11
- World Com - 9
- Zero Plus Dialing - 8
- Accutel - 8
- Frontier - 8
- FTT - 7
- ITC - 6
- Enhanced Billing Services - 6
- Integretel - 5
- McLeod USA - 5
- Web Source Media - 5
- Long Distance Billing - 4

1999 *Telecommunications* Issues:

The following list outlines the 12 most frequent problems identified by South Dakota consumers and the number of contacts received concerning each issue:

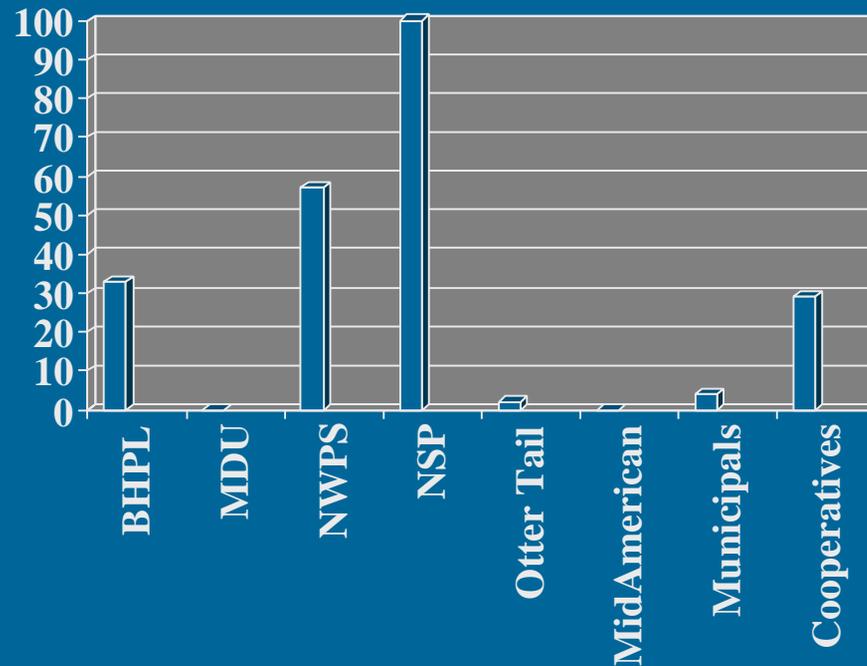
- Slamming - 993
- Fluffing (raising rates without notice) - 266
- Cramming - 212
- Billing - 139
- Poor Service - 132
- Dialing Parity - 130
- Held Order/Delayed Installation - 119
- Telemarketers - 74
- Disconnection - 60
- Fees - 57
- Won't Cancel - 49
- Outages - 37

1999 *Electricity* Issues

The following list outlines the 12 most frequent problems identified by South Dakota consumers and the number of contacts received concerning each issue:

- Disconnection - 93
- Billing - 24
- Surcharge - 16
- High Bill - 14
- Payment Arrangements - 11
- Deposit - 8
- Meter error - 7
- Delayed installation - 6
- Poor Service - 5
- Rate Increase - 4
- Outages - 4
- Easement - 2

of Contacts/Complaints per *Electric Company*



BHPL: Black Hills Power & Light (33 complaints/55,462 electric customers)

MDU: Montana-Dakota Utilities (0 complaints/9830 electric customers)

NSP: Northern States Power (100 complaints/66741 electric customers)

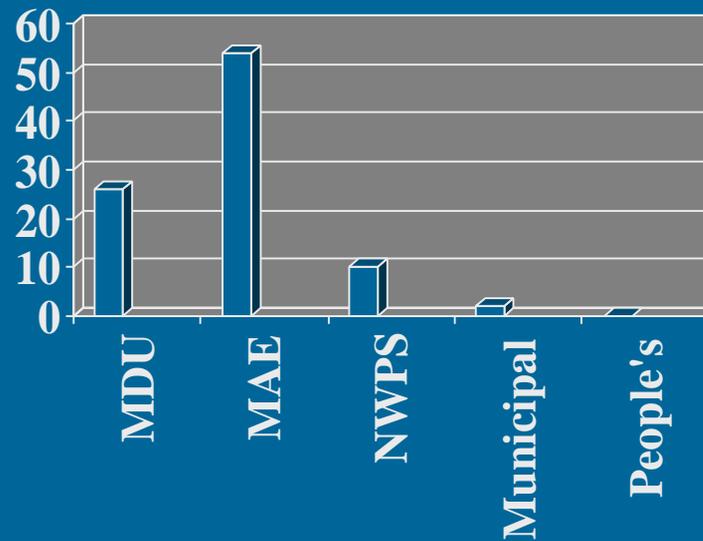
NWPS: Northwestern Public Service (57 complaints/57184 electric customers)

1999 *Natural Gas* Issues

The following list outlines the problems identified by South Dakota consumers and the number of complaints received concerning each issue:

- Disconnection - 31
- High Bill - 11
- Rate Increase - 7
- Poor Service - 3
- Delayed Installation - 2
- Fuel Assistance -2
- Repairs - 2
- Won't Disconnect - 2
- Other
 - Won't Connect
 - Telemarketer selling gas service
 - Gas line inspection

1999 *Natural Gas* Contacts/Complaints



MDU: Montana-Dakota Utilities (26 complaints/42,902 natural gas customers)

MAE: MidAmerican Energy (54 complaints/66,686 natural gas customers)

NWPS: Northwestern Public Service (10 complaints/57,184 natural gas customers)

People's Natural Gas: (0 complaints/244 natural gas customers)

1999 \$ to Consumers

Through the efforts of the PUC, South Dakota consumers have recovered over **\$250,000**.

This figure may be significantly higher. In many instances, the PUC is successful in helping consumers reach a resolution with a utility company without knowing the details of the final settlement.

